

# Acklam Grange School - A Specialist Technology College for Maths and Computing

Lodore Grove, Middlesbrough, North Yorkshire, TS5 8PB

**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement as students do not make as much progress as they could in some subjects, especially mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Teaching requires improvement because not enough is good to ensure that all groups of students, including the most-able, make consistently good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers sometimes do not use the information they have about students' prior learning to match work to need accurately.
- The quality of leadership and management requires improvement. Self-evaluation at both whole-school and department level is sometimes too generous.
- Planned actions aimed at tackling priorities sometimes lack detail and precision to show how and when these actions will improve student outcomes.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has been at the forefront of the improvements that have been made so far.
- This is a well-ordered school community where students feel safe, and behaviour and attendance have improved since the previous inspection.
- The quality of provision for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Virtually all students, when they leave school, go on to further education, training or employment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, including five that were observed jointly with senior leaders. Lessons were observed in a range of subjects and across year groups.
- During lesson observations inspectors reviewed work in students' books and observed students' behaviour between lessons inside and outside the school building.
- There were ten other classroom visits looking at marking and feedback.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of staff, students and eight members of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 89 staff questionnaires. They considered 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire for parents (Parent View) along with the school's own parental survey responses.
- Inspectors attended four registration periods. One inspector visited the Personalised Learning Centre and the inclusion room.
- The inspection team examined a number of documents, including the school's own data on students' current progress, behaviour and safeguarding, the school's own evaluation of its performance, the school improvement plan, subject improvement plans and minutes from governors' meetings.

## Inspection team

Philip Smith, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Peter Bailey	Additional Inspector
Peter William Harrison	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Acklam Grange School is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those families in the armed services and those in local authority care.)
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion of these supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses SkillForce to provide alternative off-site provision for some students.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
  - using assessment information to plan work that helps students of differing ability to make good progress
  - delivering lessons which encourage students to think more for themselves, work together productively and rely less on direction from the teacher
  - ensure that marking clearly informs students of how they can improve their work
  - creating more opportunities for students to read and respond to teachers' feedback.
- Improve achievement further by:
  - accelerating the progress boys make in some subjects
  - closing the gaps in achievement between those eligible for free school meals and their peers
  - enabling more students to achieve the very highest grades.
- Ensure that the impact of the above actions further improves achievement in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages.
- Improve and strengthen the effect leaders, particularly middle leaders, have on improving achievement by:
  - ensuring that self-evaluation is accurate and honest, and areas for improvement are clearly identified and successfully addressed
  - increasing the impact of whole-school and departmental plans on outcomes for students by having clearer targets and timescales for when and how achievement will improve.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students do not always achieve as well as they might because they do not experience enough consistently good teaching across the school over time.
- In lessons students' progress is variable. In too many lessons progress requires improvement. Inspectors did observe teaching which facilitated good, and occasionally, outstanding progress, but these better lessons are not a frequent enough component of the school's provision.
- Students enter the school with broadly average starting points. Students' achievement over the last three years has generally been improving from below to now broadly average levels. However, this masks significant variability in the performance of different subjects and groups of students including boys, the most-able and those pupils eligible for pupil premium funding.
- In English and mathematics in 2013, students made the progress that was expected of them. In English there are significant improvements in the numbers of students making better than expected progress. In contrast, the numbers of students making better than expected progress in mathematics over the last three years have been too low.
- Given their starting points in Year 7, students' progress could be faster, especially in mathematics, science and modern foreign languages. The performance of boys across the school has not been good enough and the school acknowledges the need for further improvement. Current school data at both Key Stages 3 and 4 indicates that there are signs of improvement. In visits inspectors made to form time, some students were being encouraged to use this time to read.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for free school meals is improving. It is not yet good as the gap between the performance of these students and that of their peers is not closing fast enough, especially in mathematics.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is broadly average with statemented students having done better in 2013 than similar students nationally.
- There is early entry in mathematics for some students. This does not stop them from resitting the examination in order to try to achieve their target grade or exceed it.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been largely invested in the appointment of a Year 7 achievement leader and resources to support students to improve their literacy and mathematical skills. School evaluation shows that there has been a positive impact on students' behaviour and engagement in lessons. The school is in the process of collecting evidence to see whether their achievement has been improved.
- The achievement of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average and in line with national figures.
- The school checks carefully on the small number of students who attend alternative off-site provision. This provision is effective and students are making expected progress.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is not good because too much requires improvement. Teaching is not consistently good enough to sustain good achievement across a wide range of subjects.
- In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and quality relationships. There is an appropriate pace to lessons which keeps students interested and keen to learn. There are occasions when teachers use effective strategies that encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.
- For example, in an outstanding Year 10 drama lesson, students were developing and practising their solo dance compositions. Throughout the lesson the students demonstrated a thirst for learning which was supported with outstanding teaching. The teacher actively encouraged students to think for themselves and collaborate with others as they developed their dance

compositions. Students were individually and skilfully guided by the teacher to evaluate critically each other's performance and through the teacher's excellent questioning and feedback students made outstanding progress.

- In the less effective lessons a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching is typical. This can lead to some students finding the work too hard or too easy. Some teachers do not make enough use of the data they have on students' progress to ensure that students are directed to work that is at the right level.
- Lessons are sometimes too closely directed by teachers. As a result, students do not shape their own learning often enough and instead are responding to a series of tasks or worksheets provided by the teacher. Some teachers do not give enough attention to the quality of presentation of students' work.
- Some teachers are very skilled in using questions to encourage students to think carefully and deepen their understanding. There are other times when questioning is directed to very few within the lesson and this leads to too many students remaining passive and the pace and progress of learning slows.
- There are some examples of good practice in marking and feedback. For example in English and history teachers provide feedback that requires students to make improvements to their work. This can range from correcting spellings and punctuation to extending written responses to questions. Students say they value having time to respond to teacher feedback as this helps them improve.
- Elsewhere marking and feedback require improvement. While the majority of work is marked regularly, the quality of feedback students are given about their work is too variable. In some exercise books, including mathematics, there can be minimal quality feedback. There can be a whole series of ticks and crosses but not an explanation of how to improve or where the student went wrong.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Behaviour is good. Students have positive attitudes towards school. They feel safe and cared for and this is confirmed by parents. Students have a good awareness of potential risks to their health and safety including the dangers of smoking, drugs, road safety and e-safety.
- Students feel a part of their school and as one student told inspectors "It's a community - we are all part of it." Students are willing to learn and in the best lessons this leads to good progress.
- Occasional instances of bullying are reported and when they do occur students say they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students know that they can approach staff or use a private e-mail address to inform teachers of any instances of bullying.
- There are no reported instances of homophobic or cyber-bullying and very few racist incidences. This is because the school takes a proactive approach to tackling bullying. Anti-bullying weeks along with an anti-bullying charter highlight that such behaviour is not tolerated.
- Students' behaviour has improved since the last inspection and they behave well both in lessons and around school. They are often courteous, polite and willing to open the door for you as you walk around school. Lessons are usually calm and orderly and there are generally positive attitudes to learning.
- Systems for managing challenging behaviour are good and as a result exclusions have fallen significantly over the last three years and there are now no permanent exclusions. This "House Style" approach has involved using the personalised learning centre and the inclusion unit well to reduce exclusions.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved over the last three years and are now broadly average. There are good procedures to promote their importance and to check on absence. A traffic light system lets students know if they are on time to school or run the risk of being late. There has been a good impact on punctuality rates to both school and lessons.

## The leadership and management requires improvement

- There is more work to be done by leaders to ensure that they know how and when their actions will improve student outcomes. There are inconsistencies in the way middle leaders plan for and evaluate improvements made in their own departments.
- The headteacher has spearheaded the improvements that have been made so far. She has led by example and is resolute in wanting to raise aspirations and achievement further. One senior leader spoke about the “massive cultural change” the school has undergone since she arrived and as a result underperformance is being tackled rigorously.
- The overwhelming majority of staff survey responses highlighted that staff felt the school is moving in the right direction and middle leaders reported to inspectors that they are being held accountable for student outcomes more so than ever before.
- Other senior leaders, including the governing body, are clear about where weaknesses remain. This is an improving school. Leaders demonstrate the capacity to improve as is evidenced through improvements to behaviour and attendance, and some improvements in overall achievement since the last inspection.
- School self-evaluation highlights the priorities for further improvement. It is, however, overgenerous in its view of the overall effectiveness of the school. There are times when lesson observation judgements err on the side of being too generous especially when teaching may require improvement.
- Performance management is understood clearly by staff. Targets are linked to the Teachers’ Standards and targets now include rates of student progress as one of the performance measures. Clearer links have been made between teacher performance and pay rises. There is evidence of staff not having pay rises as a result.
- The curriculum is suited to the needs and aspirations of the students and their parents. There are a number of different pathways that students can follow including academic, vocational and foundation learning routes.
- Information, advice and guidance is good as students are provided with a range of careers’ guidance including a careers’ fair and visits to and from local colleges. As a result the number of students not entering employment, education or further training is extremely low.
- Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a strong feature of the school. There are a number of enrichment activities including a range of extra-curricular activities. For example, the recent ski trip to Italy and support for charities including a coffee morning for the Macmillan Cancer charity and the raising awareness of global issues. The school gives students responsibilities and a number are prefects. There are also good levels of tolerance and students work well together from different cultural and religious backgrounds. There is also a good range of artistic and musical experiences.
- There are strong external partnerships being formed with an outstanding school as well as with other external consultants.
- While the local authority is overgenerous in its view of the school and its performance, it rightly highlights the strengths and the improvements made since the arrival of the new headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body have felt “re-energised” over the last two years since the arrival of the new headteacher.
  - Governors are keen and actively encouraged to challenge the school on its performance. Minutes from meetings show that governors are asking perceptive and challenging questions about the performance of mathematics and the degree to which school targets are challenging.
  - The governors discuss the school’s performance, including payment in relation to the quality of teaching.
  - The governors are financially prudent and ensure that funding such as the pupil premium is

spent wisely. They are focused on value for money and the need to ensure impact on student outcomes.

- They recognise that the school is on a journey of improvement and agree with one governor who said “the headteacher has started to turn around the school.”
- Governors are aware that the performance of mathematics, science and modern foreign languages needs to improve further.
- All statutory duties, including safeguarding are fully met.

## What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111751
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	429085

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,407
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jeff Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrea Crawshaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2012
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